Etincelles

Nachrichten aus Dresden

After leaving Austria and the fields, I headed for Germany, to Dresden. For ten days, hosted very kindly by Elise, I was able to rest a little, enjoy the city and a slower pace to make watercolors, and investigate Dresden's interesting initiatives. In particular, I attended two Repair Café evenings and met a landscape architect who is transforming schoolyards... If you are interested, I wish you happy reading. 😉

* = For more details, french versions or to retrace the previous steps, take a look at the following link:
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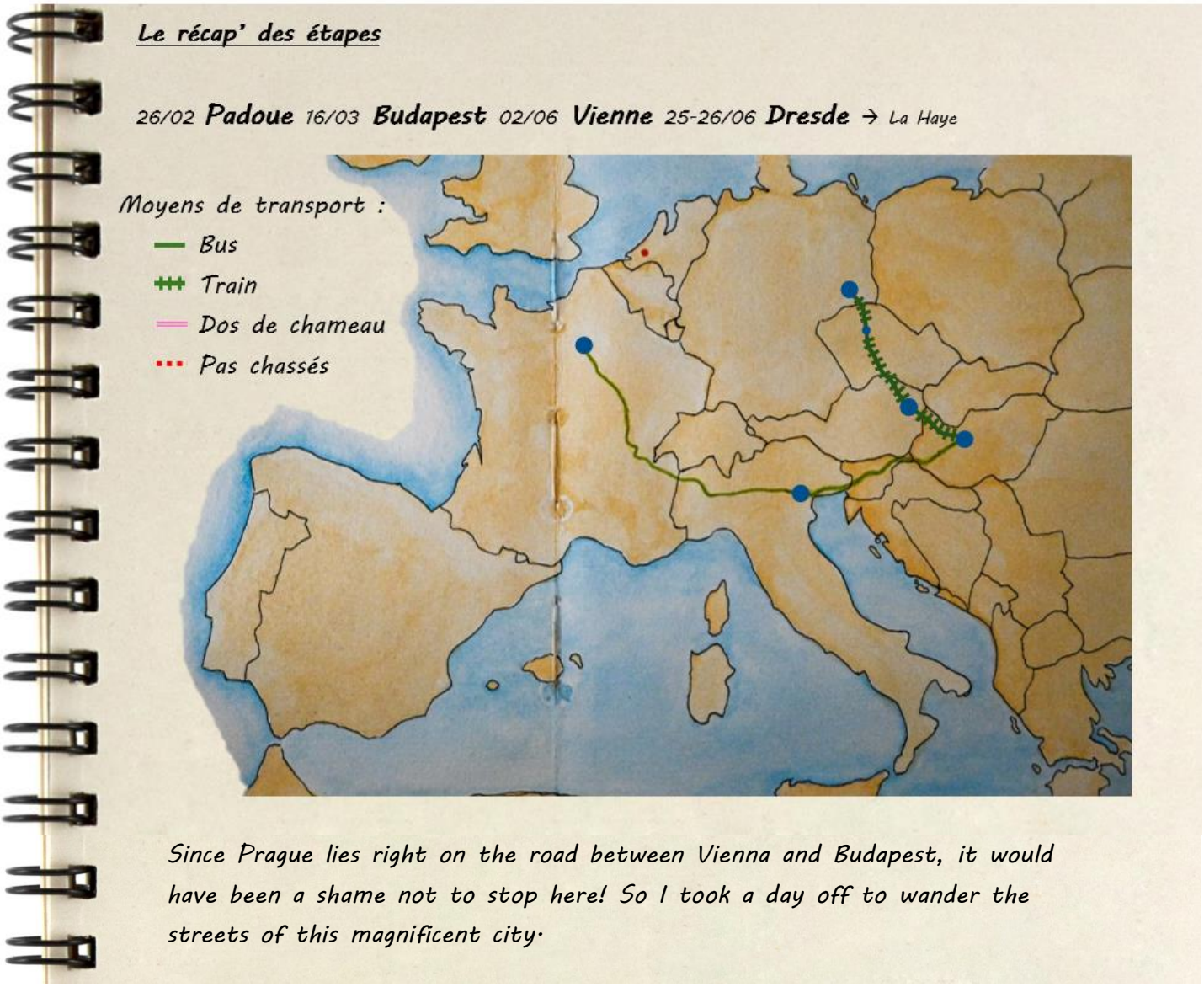


Repair Cafés

A concept coming from the Netherlands

The Repair Café Foundation was founded in Amsterdam in 2010. The aim: to make repairing a normal part of life again, while creating opportunities for social interaction and sharing. As you may have guessed, a Repair Café is an association that enables people to repair everyday objects, while sharing a convivial moment over a cup of coffee!

Over the past 15 years, the network has grown considerably, and Repair Cafés can be found almost everywhere. You may even have seen one in your neighbourhood!

Zooming on Dresden and Freital Repair Café

In Dresden, the initiative was launched by a group of 4 students in 2012, from a wide variety of backgrounds (chemistry, architecture, social work). The project then expanded, and now some fifteen volunteers with extensive knowledge of the subject (mechanics, electronics, DIY) are on hand every week to help those who wish to extend the life of their objects.

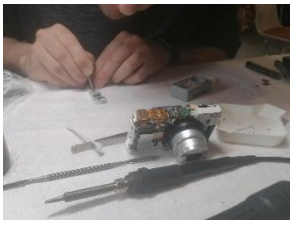
A few features distinguish this Repair Café from many others:

Moving workshop - there is not one but six addresses that rotate each week, allowing them to reach populations of different ages and backgrounds. The logistics are a little more complex, as all the tools have to be moved each time, but it's worth it!

Registration – since Covid, a registration system has been in place. By describing in advance the problem to be solved or the object to be repaired, residents can come at a set time. This means that repairs can be better anticipated, and people don't have to wait too long for their items to be repaired…

Coffee, but not only – for a long time, the habit was to share a cup of coffee and cakes made by the participants, for a much friendlier evening. Unfortunately, this tradition was lost with Covid, but who knows, maybe it will come back one day?

Suitcases, telephones, vacuum cleaners, cameras, we can see all kinds of repairs, except if the operation is deemed too risky by the volunteers, or requires too expensive equipment and professional gestures.



Repair Cafés advantages

- ✓ Prolong the life of everyday objects, thus avoiding throwing them away and buying new ones when they are not needed.
- ✓ Teach people to repair their own objects, or at least show them how.
- ✓ A place for discussion and exchange

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Schoolyard transformer

I was lucky enough to be able to chat with Sigrid in an impromptu interview two days beforehand. Among other things, Sigrid works for a project called Schulhof Transformer, which translates as “schoolyard transformer”.

Zukunfsstadt Dresden : future city

A few years ago, the City of Dresden launched the Zukunftsstadt Dresden (Future City) project, with the aim of promoting greater sustainability in the city, by helping projects to develop and take shape. Numerous initiatives have sprung from this process, including StadtGärten (*several urban vegetable garden projects, gardening tool sharing…)*, Zur Tonne *(food waste recycling)*, Materialvermittlung (*reuse of materials not used by businesses*), and Schulhof Transformer.

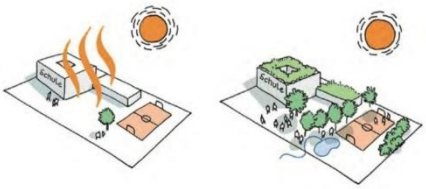
Green spaces and social link

The aim of Schulof Transformer is to provide children with a better playground environment than a simple concrete courtyard without shade. By providing more biodiversity, shade and suitable play facilities, the playground can have a greater impact, both ecologically and for the children who spend most of their free time there.

Each project involves teachers and students in its conception and realization. Often, a week with the classes is dedicated to assessing the situation and the need.

Water and shade, two major challenges

The main problem with schoolyards as we know them is that there isn't enough shade. So we need more trees. But it's not that simple, as trees often have difficulty growing, and sometimes die within a few months of an attempted planting. So it is not so much a question of trees as of water management! To retain water for as long as possible, one idea is to create a large area with soil and other substrates to better maintain the water cycle and help vegetation to grow.



Sigrid, landscape architect for *Schulhof Transformer* project:

“There is hope while we do something and have people working together to change even just the place they are in. ***Then the snowball effect happens : people can see not only hope but also the concrete result of a project so they may feel more able to do something as well.*** *Really often, people are willing to do things better but they don’t know how to take action so we try to help them.”*

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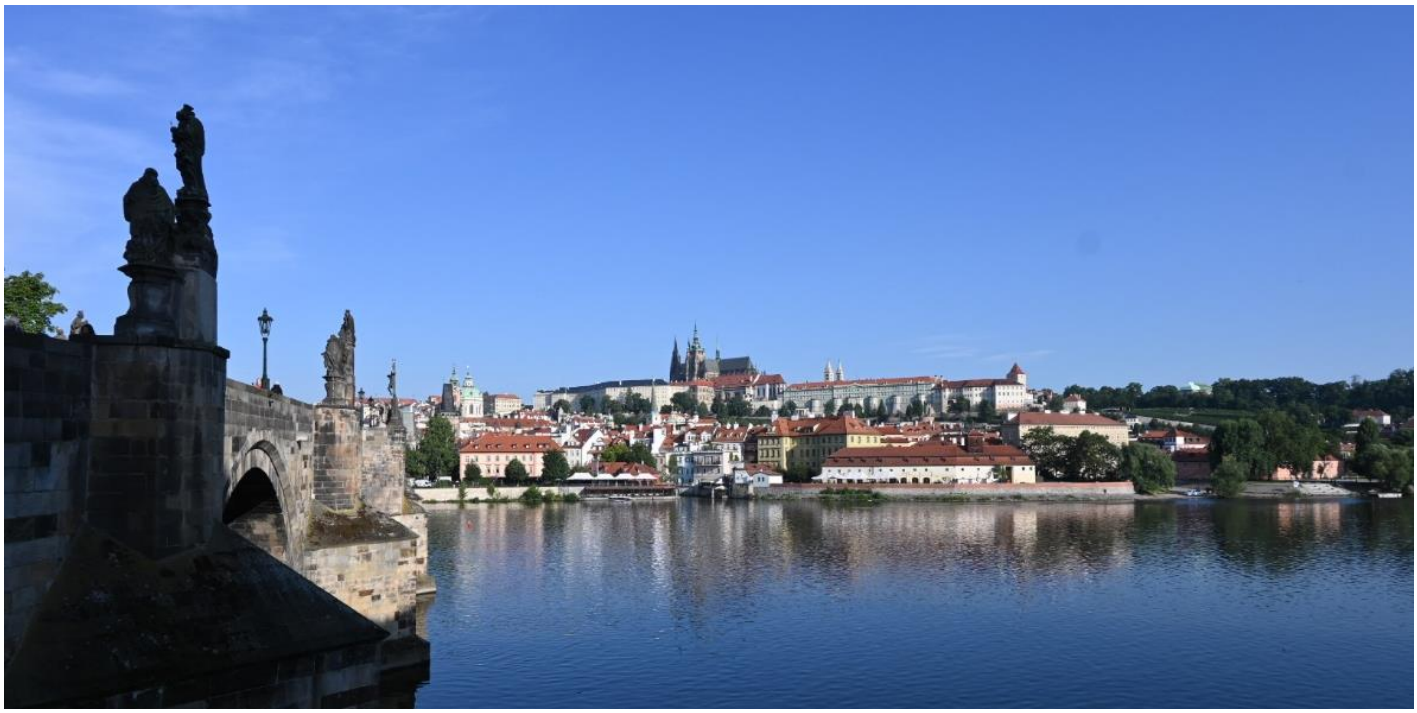
Photo report

Destroyed during the war, many of Dresden's monuments have been rebuilt to their original appearance. Such is the case of the Frauenkirche, from the top of which you can admire a magnificent view of the city. The banks of the River Elbe are also very pleasant, especially for watercolor painting! Thank you Elise for your warm welcome ❤



Prague

Before arriving in Dresden, a day in Prague was well worth it! Charles Bridge in the early morning, view of the city from Letenské sady park, Astronomical Clock and Cathedral.